

Guildford Dominate

Roger Emerson's champions made short shrift of the opposition in the final weekend of the 4NCL season, Guildford finishing first and second in Division 1

The top divisions of the 4NCL returned to Hinckley for a final hurrah over the first May Bank Holiday weekend. Division One said goodbye to Hackney, South Wales Dragons, the AD's and Warwickshire Select, as e2e4.org retained their top-flight status. The main story, though, was the dominance of Roger Emerson's all-conquering Guildford. Nigel Short elected to remain in the Americas after his match with Garry Kasparov, but Guildford I still fielded a generally 2600+ line-up: Romain Edouard, Mark Hebden, Gawain Jones, Jean-Pierre le Roux, Sebastian Maze, Matthew Sadler, Antoaneta Stefanova and Robin van Kampen.

Assisted by 100% from Hebden and Stefanova, not to mention 2½/3 from Jones and Sadler, Guildford swept past Blackthorne Russia 6½-1½, White Rose 5½-2½ and Barbican 6½-1½. Strangely Guildford's match with the Yorkshire side, which saw the champions retain their title, wasn't selected for the live broadcast. That was a shame as they at least had to work, being held on the top five boards, partly thanks to Peter Wells' draw with Matthew Sadler and a far-too-ambitious van Kampen being outplayed by the GM-norm-making James Adair.



White Rose supremo Paul Townsend suffered at the hands of Jean-Pierre le Roux, but steered his team to an impressive sixth successive European Club Cup qualification.

J.P. Le Roux - M.P. Townsend Guildford vs White Rose



White's Catalan has been a major success, largely thanks to the dark-squared weaknesses created when Black parried an attack on h7. The French GM finished crisply. **22 ♖xd5! ♗xd5 23 ♖f6+ ♕h8 24 ♗xd5 ♗xd5 25 cxd5!**

Few would be able to resist this, although there was nothing wrong with the mundane 25 ♖f4, and if 25...♗xc4 26 ♗xd5.

25...♗xc1+ 26 ♗xc1 ♖g7

Black has queen for rook and knight, but cannot defend the dark squares around his king, because if 26...♗d8 27 d6 ♗a5 28 d7 ♗c7 29 ♗d5.

27 ♗c8 ♗f8 28 ♗xf8! 1-0

Guildford II also won all three matches in the final weekend, including a 5½-2½ win against their main rivals for second place, Cheddleton. Indeed, the only team to take any points off a Guildford side in the top division was White Rose and their win against Guildford II came back in the opening weekend. Cheddleton bounced back with an impressive tenth round 5½-2½ demolition of Barbican. Fiona Steil-Antoni's team then shared the points with White Rose in a long, final round match, a result which qualified both teams behind Guildford for this autumn's Europe Club Cup in Skopje.

The 4NCL is, of course, all about team chess, although there is also room for individuals to shine. On top of James Adair's second GM norm (with an impressive 9/11), Tom Eckersley-Waites, Iain Gourlay, Isaac Sanders and Carlos Suarez Garcia made IM norms, while Alan Merry took further steps towards the 2400 rating he needs to become an IM with the following fine win.

Notes by Malcolm Pein

A. Merry-D. Fernandez AD's vs e2e4.org Caro-Kann Defence

1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 ♗d2 dxe4 4 ♗xe4 ♗d7 5 ♗g5 ♗gf6 6 ♗d3 e6

Normal, although another game from the weekend saw 6...g6 7 ♗1f3 ♗g7 8 0-0 0-0 9 c3 h6 and then the spectacular 10 ♗xf7! ♗xf7 (10...♗xf7 11 ♖c2 g5 12 ♗xg5 hxg5 13 ♗xg5+ ♖g8 14 ♗c4+ ♖h8 15 ♗e6 ♖e8 16 ♗c7 ♖h5 17 ♗xa8 is very unclear, but here White might prefer 12 h4 gxh4 13 ♗xh4 ♖g8 14 ♗f5 which looks promising) 11 ♗xg6 ♗f8 (after 11...♗f8 12 ♗c2 ♗b6 13 ♖d3 followed by moves like ♗e1 and ♗e5, White has excellent compensation) 12 ♗xf7+ ♗xf7 13 ♖b3+ ♖d5 14 c4 ♖f5 15 ♗e1 when the rook and two pawns outclassed the two minor pieces, White going on to win in Jones-D'Costa. **7 ♗1f3 ♗d6 8 ♖e2 h6 9 ♗e4 ♗xe4 10 ♖xe4 ♖c7 11 0-0 b6 12 ♖g4 g5!?**

Known to be risky. The main line is 12...♗f8 13 b3.

13 ♖h3

Avoiding 13 ♗e1 ♗f6 14 ♖h3 g4.

13...♗g8 14 ♗e1! ♗b7

This runs into a powerful blow, but so does 14...g4 15 ♖xh6 gxf3 whereupon 16 ♜xe6+! fxe6 17 ♖xe6+ ♗f8 18 ♕h6+ ♜g7 19 ♕xg7+ ♗xg7 20 ♖g6+ ♗f8 21 ♕c4 ♕xh2+ 22 ♗h1 fvg2+ 23 ♗xg2 ♖e5 24 dxe5 ♖g7 25 ♖xg7+ ♗xg7 26 ♗xh2 would leave White winning.



15 ♜xe6+!! fxe6 16 ♖xe6+ ♗f8 17 ♖xh6+ ♜g7

Black is helpless as he cannot move his knight anywhere sensible and allow his queen to join the defence. Now if 17...♗e8 18 ♕xg5 with ♜e1+ next.

18 ♕xg5

18 ♖xg5 ♜e8 19 ♖h7+ ♗f7 20 ♖h5+ ♗e7 21 ♕g5+ ♜xg5 22 ♖xg5+ ♗f7 23 ♕g6+ was also winning.

18...b5 19 ♜e1 c5 20 ♖h4 ♗g8 21 ♖e6+ ♜f7



It's White to play and win!

22 ♕h7+!

The most clinical, although 22 ♕g6 also wins.

22...♗g7 23 ♖h6+ ♗h8 24 ♖g6# 1-0

Another brutal encounter saw Laurence Webb destroy the fairly trendy 3...♖d6 in the Centre-Counter.

L. Webb-Sa. Williams
Blackthorne Russia vs
Grantham Sharks
Scandinavian Defence

1 e4 d5 2 exd5 ♖xd5 3 ♖c3 ♖d6 4 d4 c6 5 ♕c4 ♖f6 6 ♖ge2 ♖f5 7 ♕f4

Not the main line, but such straightforward development can hardly be bad.

7...♖b4 8 ♕b3 e6 9 0-0 ♖bd7

Sam Williams finds the right moves. The text is recommended by Cyrus Lakdawala in *The Scandinavian: Move by Move*, as a way of avoiding 9...♕e7?! 10 ♕c7!

10 ♕c7

Moving the bishop here in any case must be critical, but the black queen does now have an escape square.

10...♜c8 11 a3 ♖e7 12 ♖g3 ♜xc7



Alan Merry already has his IM norms, but still needs to reach 2400. His demolition of the Caro-Kann can but help with that.

13 ♖xf5 ♖d8 14 ♜e1

White leads in development, but Black's position appears rock-solid; a view Webb takes immediate steps to challenge.

14...g6 15 d5!? cxd5 16 ♖d4?

Full marks to White for creativity, but objectively he should have preferred to regain his pawn with 16 ♖e3 ♕e7 17 ♕xd5!.



16...♕c5?

The right square, but the wrong piece. Correct was 16...♖c5, covering e6, and if 17 ♖xd5 (17 ♖cb5 ♜d7 18 ♖xa7 maintains material equality, but is also pretty good for Black after 18...♕g7 19 ♖ab5 ♖fe4) 17...♖xd5 18 ♕xd5 ♜d7 19 c4 ♕e7 when White will lose material.

17 ♜xe6+!

Olé!

17...fxe6 18 ♖xe6 ♖c8 19 ♖xd5 ♜c6 20 ♖e2 ♗f7?

Many would have declined the rook with 17...♗f8, but Williams' greed was not ill-placed. Unfortunately for him, though, the text loses, whereas 20...♕d6! 21 ♖g5+ ♗f8 22 ♜e1 (it's also possible to force a draw with 22 ♖e6+ ♗g8 23 ♖d4 ♖xd5 24 ♕xd5+ ♗g7 25 ♖e6+ ♗f7) 22...♖xd5 23 ♕xd5 ♕e5 would have seen Black defending. White doesn't seem to have anything better than 24 ♖e6+ ♗e7 25 ♕xc6 ♖xc6 26 ♖d4, but after 26...♖d6 27 ♖f3 ♗f6 the defence is holding.

21 ♖xc5 ♜e8

Preventing the huge check on e7, but now Black's badly exposed king will prove his undoing.

22 ♖xf6+ ♗xf6 23 ♖f3+ ♗e7 24 ♖f7+ ♗d8 25 ♖e6+ ♜xe6 26 ♕xe6 ♜e7 27 ♕xd7 ♖xd7 28 ♖f8+ ♜e8 29 ♖f6+ ♗c8 30 ♖c3+ 1-0

2014/5 - 4NCL Division 1 Championship Pool							
	Team	P	W	D	L	Pts	GP
1	Guildford I	7	7	0	0	42	14
2	Guildford II	7	5	0	2	34	10
3	Cheddleton	7	4	1	2	30½	9
4	White Rose	7	2	3	2	27½	7
5	Blackthorne Russia	7	3	2	2	23½	6
6	Barbican 4NCL	7	2	1	4	24	5
7	Oxford	7	2	0	5	22	4
8	Grantham Sharks	7	0	1	6	20½	1

2014/5 - 4NCL Division 1 Relegation Pool							
	Team	P	W	D	L	Pts	GP
1	Wood Green	7	6	1	0	13	37
2	Barbican 4NCL II	7	4	2	1	10	32
3	Cambridge University	7	4	2	1	10	29½
4	e2e4.org	7	3	1	3	7	30½
5	South Wales Dragons	7	3	0	4	6	25
6	Hackney	7	2	1	4	5	24½
7	Warwickshire Select	7	1	1	5	3	23½
8	The AD's	7	1	0	6	2	21